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Summary record of the 3470th meeting*
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Chair: Ms. Waterval (Rapporteur)

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* No summary record was issued for the 3469th meeting.

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In the absence of Mr. Iwasawa, Ms. Waterval (Rapporteur) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Third periodic report of Lebanon (*continued*) (CCPR/C/LBN/3; CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3; CCPR/C/LBN/Q/3/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Lebanon took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chair** said that, at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the delegation would be speaking via video link from Beirut. On behalf of the Committee, she apologized for any inconvenience caused by the Committee's decision to postpone the continuation of its consideration of the State party's report.

3. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon) said that the confessional model in place in Lebanon was not regulated by a specific law or by specific articles of the Constitution, as it had developed gradually over time. Indeed, it could be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. Confessionalism made it possible for all communities to play an active role in governance while retaining some degree of autonomy in such spheres as religion, education and personal status. Lebanon had always had a hybrid political and social system. Under international law, a State was entitled to select the political and social system that was most appropriate for its people. The constituent communities of Lebanon were openly debating the matter of personal status in the context of confessionalism. The form of confessionalism practised in Lebanon could not be said to undermine national unity. In fact, it had helped to ensure stability and protect the social fabric. The constitutional amendments introduced following the Taif Agreement had created scope for amending the confessional model, where appropriate, and legislation had recently been passed to limit its impact on the political process.

4. **Ms. Akoum** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that torture was legally defined as an offence committed during specific stages of the criminal justice process. That definition, combined with the definition set out in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ensured that officials could be prosecuted for the offence of torture in respect of acts committed at any stage of that process. The applicable penalties varied in terms of their severity. Acts of torture that caused a disability, even if only temporary, were punishable under criminal law. The statute of limitations for the offence of torture did not begin to run until the victim had been released from detention or had finished serving a prison sentence. In accordance with article 14 of the Convention against Torture, the courts could order rehabilitation measures for victims in addition to compensation.

5. Investigating judges were required to consult the Office of the Public Prosecutor prior to ordering the imposition of alternative measures. However, they were not bound by the outcome of such a consultation if they could put forward a reasoned decision. Investigating judges had the power to impose restraints and other alternatives to pretrial detention. In one recent case, a group of Muslims found guilty of desecrating a Christian statue had been ordered by the judge to memorize verses of the Qur'an that venerated Mary, the mother of Jesus.

6. **Mr. Al Maghribi** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the National Human Rights Commission, which oversaw the Committee for Protection from Torture, had been established under Act No. 62. The National Human Rights Commission was responsible for, inter alia, receiving complaints and organizing human rights education. The Committee for Protection from Torture carried out unannounced visits to places of deprivation of liberty, interviewed persons deprived of their liberty and drew up recommendations. Government bodies were required to supply any information requested by the Committee. The Ministry of Human Rights had sent the Council of Ministers a shortlist from which the 10 members of the National Human Rights Commission would be selected. The Commission was adequately funded.

7. **Mr. El Ghossainy** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the principle of community-based policing had been adopted as part of a broader strategy for the period 2018–2023. The four objectives of the strategy were to increase security, strengthen partnership with civil society, increase accountability and build professional and institutional capacity. Measures had been taken to raise awareness within the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities of the work of the Committee for Protection from Torture. In 2017, the Commission had received 65 complaints of torture, which had resulted in the imposition of penalties on 40 officers.

8. The wording of article 1 of the Convention against Torture had been incorporated into an Internal Security Forces memorandum. Video surveillance cameras had been installed in various facilities, including some places of detention, the human trafficking office and the drug trafficking office. In 2016, a code of conduct had been drawn up for the Internal Security Forces. In April 2018, an independent complaints system developed in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme would be introduced at Roumieh prison. The human rights unit attached to the Directorate General of the Internal Security Forces would handle any complaints received. Human rights offices had been established at three major prisons, including Roumieh prison. Those offices monitored prison conditions and issued instructions. A study had also been produced on the measures required to implement international standards relating to the operation of prisons.

9. Various factors, including the recent influx of refugees, had placed a strain on the criminal justice system. In order to accommodate inmates who posed a heightened security risk, a new prison was being constructed in the north of the country, and a new building had been added to Roumieh prison. The following day, under an agreement with the European Union, the Ministry of the Interior would inaugurate the construction of a new juvenile prison. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities had established a joint commission to address the issue of poor conditions in prisons, including overcrowding, and to study alternative penalties to imprisonment. Juveniles were held separately from adults, and there were detention centres specifically for juveniles.

10. Overcrowding was a distinct problem in the 23 prisons in Lebanon. In cooperation with civil society and international organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a specialized psychosocial rehabilitation centre had been set up at Tripoli prison. The human rights office and the Committee for Protection from Torture monitored the implementation of the decree under which disciplinary measures could be imposed.

11. There was a maximum limit on the number of hours for which an arrested person could be held in police custody. The rights afforded to persons held in police custody were set out in article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and information on those rights was displayed prominently in all police stations.

12. **Mr. Kamal** (Lebanon) speaking via video link from Beirut, said that, under article 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the judicial police could detain a suspect for 48 hours with the possibility of a 48-hour extension subject to the approval of the competent public prosecutor. The length of a period of custody was calculated from the time of arrest. He categorically denied that the Ministry of National Defence operated secret detention centres. Decree No. 6236 listed the 13 prisons subject to the authority of the Ministry of National Defence. Those prisons were visited regularly by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had signed a protocol with relevant national authorities. The Committee for Protection from Torture also visited military prisons.

13. Act No. 422 concerning the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk stipulated that juveniles had to be detained separately from adults. He categorically denied reports that juveniles had died in the military justice system. No complaints had been received in that regard. The military court implemented legislation relating to the prevention of torture. In addition, emergency measures could be taken in response to allegations of torture in the military justice system. Article 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulated that allegations of torture should be dealt with in the criminal justice system.

14. Human rights resources had been produced to train personnel at every rank in the army. Information on the army's directorate on international humanitarian law and human rights could be found on its website. In 2017, around 270 officers had undergone training on the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups. The regulations governing the operation of military prisons had been amended with a view to improving the protection of human rights. It was likely that approval would soon be given to a proposal submitted to reduce the maximum statutory duration of a period of solitary confinement from 30 to 15 days. Intensive efforts were being made to improve conditions in military prisons. In addition, new prisons were under construction, and improvements were constantly being made to existing prisons. Committees had been set up to address the issue of prison overcrowding and to establish a complaints mechanism.

15. **Mr. Al Maghribi** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the Ministry of Human Rights had adopted an action plan on enforced disappearances, which had been launched in the presence of civil society and a representative of the family of a disappeared person. The Minister of Human Rights had met the families of disappeared persons. The Internal Security Forces cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Government anticipated signing a protocol with the International Committee of the Red Cross aimed at collecting DNA samples from the relatives of persons who had disappeared before 1975. A draft decree on enforced disappearance had been submitted to the Council of Ministers. It aimed to establish the right of the relatives of missing and forcibly displaced persons to know the fate of those persons and would provide for the establishment of an independent national committee to gather information and maintain a centralized database.

16. A decree had been adopted to establish a committee to draft reports on the implementation of international human rights instruments and to follow up recommendations made by the bodies responsible for monitoring their implementation. The Ministry of Human Rights had launched an action plan on the matter with the participation of NGOs. The decree stipulated that the committee, which included representatives from all ministries, was required to consult and coordinate with NGOs. In February 2018, a workshop had been held to discuss the possibility of submitting a midterm report as part of the universal periodic review process.

17. **Ms. Akoum** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that women who underwent a voluntary termination of pregnancy on medical grounds would not face any legal consequences. Women could also cite the preservation of their honour as a mitigating circumstance, and judges considered other mitigating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The term "honour crime" did not feature in the Criminal Code. In 2011, the extenuating circumstances from which male offenders had been able to benefit in certain cases of "honour crime" had been abolished. Civil court judgments that concerned matters of personal status could be appealed in cassation.

18. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would appreciate the delegation's confirmation that the State party's anti-torture law was applicable in military courts. Although the State party had asserted that the Ministry of Defence did not run secret detention centres, he had been made aware of credible allegations that such centres existed or had existed in the past and that, in some centres, children had died. He therefore wondered whether the delegation could confirm that the State party's position was indeed that no such centres existed. In addition, he wondered whether any sanctions had been imposed on the perpetrators of acts of torture in the Roumieh prison case. He also wished to know whether the National Human Rights Commission's Committee for the Protection from Torture was operational and able to visit all detention centres in Lebanon.

19. Lebanese labour law excluded migrant domestic workers, whose employment was regulated through a sponsorship regime known as the kafala system. Employers using the kafala system had total control of their employees' legal status. Practices such as the confiscation of national identity documents, non-payment and overworking were commonplace, as were verbal and sexual abuse. Furthermore, workers faced legal obstacles and potential imprisonment if they attempted to sue their employers for abuse. Members of their families were often forced into bonded labour to work off debts owed to employers that were incurred through rent arrears. In that connection, he wished to know what the

State party was doing increase the level of protection afforded to migrant workers, which would include addressing the ill-treatment of domestic migrant workers. In particular, he wondered whether the State party planned to reform the kafala system, establish monitoring mechanisms in cooperation with civil society to detect the abuse of migrant workers, raise migrant workers' awareness of their rights, or set up a legal protection framework to regulate their living and working conditions. He understood that the Ministry of Labour had introduced a standard employment contract in 2009 and wondered how many such contracts had been concluded since. Lastly, he wished to know whether the State party intended to compile statistics regarding migrant workers and make them available to the public.

20. **Ms. Pazartzis** said that progress towards a law on civil marriage had been hindered and it appeared that the practice of registering civil marriages had been discontinued by the Ministry of the Interior. She wondered whether the delegation could comment on those issues. In addition, the Committee understood that a bill proposing to allow Lebanese women who were not married to Lebanese men to pass their nationality on to their children would not confer the same right to women married to men from neighbouring countries. She wondered whether the delegation could comment on that issue.

21. Although the Committee commended the State party for its commitment to the principle of non-refoulement and for not deporting Syrian nationals with expired legal status or without legal papers, strict border admission regulations introduced in January 2015 had resulted in restricted access to asylum and people being turned away at the border with Syria, which could amount to refoulement. Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees originating from countries other than Syria risked deportation or refoulement. In that connection, she wondered whether the delegation could comment on reports of cases in which asylum seekers and refugees, mostly from Iraq and the Sudan, had been deported from detention centres in 2017. Moreover, she wondered whether the delegation could clarify its position on non-refoulement and was interested to know whether the State party was considering adopting a comprehensive domestic framework for asylum.

22. The State party had indicated that detention could not be carried out without a judicial warrant and that administrative detention did not exist in Lebanon. However, a law on entry into and exit from Lebanon adopted in 1962 provided the Directorate General of Public Security with the discretion to deport persons from Lebanon as well as to hold them in detention until deportation without a judicial warrant. She wished to know whether Lebanese legislation set time limits on the duration of detention in such cases and would welcome information on any appeal procedures available to persons due to be deported, as well as information on the number of appeals granted, if any. Moreover, she wondered whether the State party could provide information on the number of detained minors, child asylum seekers and child refugees in Lebanon, including information regarding the grounds on which they had been detained and whether they had access to legal aid.

23. Turning to the issue of the legal status of refugees in Lebanon, she wondered whether the delegation could elaborate on the measures taken to ensure that refugees, particularly Palestinian refugees, had valid residency documents and appropriate legal status. Furthermore, she would welcome the delegation's comments on reports of municipal evictions, curfews and raids targeting Syrian refugees and would appreciate further information on any appeals lodged against municipal evictions. In that connection, she was interested to know what steps had been taken to guarantee refugees' basic rights, such as access to housing. Ultimately, the Committee wished to know whether refugees of all nationalities were treated equally.

24. Lastly, she would welcome information on the legal safeguards in place against arbitrary invasions of personal privacy. The Committee had received reports that the Government regularly authorized the interception of private communications and access to private data without prior judicial authorization. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers had given full access to telecommunications data to the Lebanese security agencies in 2014 and had extended that access in 2016. She wondered whether the delegation could clarify how those practices were compliant with Act No. 140, on the protection of the right to confidentiality of information, and with the principles of necessity and proportionality. Moreover, she wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that surveillance

activities were subject to independent oversight and would welcome information on the legal framework regulating the use of biometrical data, including any data-protection guarantees.

25. **Mr. Politi** said that he would appreciate the delegation's confirmation that children and adults were always kept in separate facilities during detention, even in cases involving children who had committed crimes together with adults. He understood that a judgment had been passed in 2014 revoking the regulation that prohibited defence lawyers from assisting their clients during interrogations that took place in administrative detention, but that in some cases the judgment was not followed. He therefore wondered how the resulting uncertainty affected the conduct of the preliminary questioning of suspects and whether it was true that suspects were kept in detention for prolonged periods before being allowed to contact an attorney.

26. It was clear from paragraph 97 of the State party's report that the Government was concerned about the judiciary's lack of independence and impartiality. In that connection, the Committee would appreciate further information on the status of the State party's planned reform of the judiciary, including more detailed information on the content of the bills described in paragraph 97, their consideration by the Chamber of Deputies and the date on which they would be approved. The Committee had received reports that political pressure was often exerted on the judiciary with regard to the appointment of key prosecutors and investigating magistrates and that important politicians and intelligence officers occasionally intervened in judicial proceedings in aid of their supporters, sometimes at those supporters' request. He wondered whether the delegation could indicate whether criminal proceedings had been instigated against judges, prosecutors or other individuals involved in that type of corrupt activity and whether the Supreme Judicial Council had taken disciplinary action in that regard.

27. In paragraph 14 of its previous concluding observations (CCPR/C/79/Add.78), the Committee had recommended that the State party should review the broad jurisdiction of military courts. In that connection, he wondered whether the delegation could provide more detailed information, including statistics, relating to the number of proceedings held before military courts involving civilians and children in the previous five years. In addition, the Committee would welcome further information on the status and content of the three bills on the abolition of military courts and the restoration of the competence of ordinary courts described in paragraph 94 of the State party's report. In particular, it would be interesting to know whether the bills addressed the lack of independence and impartiality of military court judges, as well as alleged violations of the rights of accused parties and the use of military courts to suppress the activities of political adversaries. Moreover, he wondered whether the delegation could confirm reports that military judges were appointed by the Minister of Defence and were not required to hold a law degree. It would also be useful to know more about access to military court proceedings, particularly for human rights organizations and journalists. He wondered whether the delegation could provide confirmation that there was only a limited right to appeal within the military court system and that the use of confessions extracted under torture was not considered grounds for appeal. Lastly, the Committee had received reports of violations of the rights of detainees by military courts, including ill-treatment and torture, incommunicado detention and arbitrary sentencing. It had also received reports that the military prosecutor had brought charges against human rights lawyers and activists who had spoken out about torture by the Lebanese military. He therefore wondered whether the delegation could comment on reported violations of detainees' rights and provide information regarding any measures adopted to put an end to such violations and guarantee the impartiality of military judges. It would be useful to know whether any investigations had been conducted into allegations of torture and inhuman treatment by personnel of the Ministry of Defence, whether statistics had been made available regarding the number of cases in which charges had been brought by the military prosecutor against human rights lawyers and activists, and what limits were imposed on the right to appeal against military court judgments.

28. **Mr. de Frouville** said that the delegation had not offered any additional information in response to his previous questions on enforced disappearances and abortion. With regard to the former, he wished to know whether the reports of the various Lebanese committees

that had worked on the issue of enforced disappearance would be made available to the public as a first step towards upholding the right to truth for the families of victims. He also wondered whether the State party planned to make enforced disappearance a distinct offence in its Criminal Code, as the provisions on enforced disappearance set out in article 569 of the Code were not in line with international law. Furthermore, he was interested to know whether the State party planned to allow for the families of disappeared persons to declare them as missing, should they be unwilling to apply for a declaration of death, to allow them to address administrative issues such as inheritance. He understood that the Chamber of Deputies was considering a bill on the establishment of an independent national commission on disappeared persons and wondered whether the delegation could provide information on the bill's content and when it would be adopted. Similarly, he wondered when the State party would finish the process of ratifying the Convention on Enforced Disappearance.

29. It would be helpful if the delegation could confirm the high number of abortions which reportedly took place in Lebanon each year. It would also be useful to know how many abortions took place in unsafe conditions and whether there were plans to open a debate on the decriminalization of the voluntary termination of pregnancy.

30. There were reports that since late 2016, at least 18 people had been arrested for publicly criticizing State officials or politicians. In early 2018, a military court had sentenced a Lebanese journalist in absentia to 6 months in prison for having defamed the armed forces. Recalling the Committee's position as stated in general comment No. 34, he wished to know whether the State party was considering decriminalizing defamation or, at a minimum, providing for lesser penalties for the offence.

31. The Directorate General of Public Security played an important role in the exercising of controls over foreign publications and works of art, occasionally applying disproportionate measures such as the censoring of films for perceived criticism of religions or public figures. He would be interested to hear more about the Directorate's authority, the legislative framework for its actions and the possibility of appealing its decisions. He would also like to know whether there were plans for a legislative review in order to avoid the risk of excessive censorship. He would welcome additional information on the 2016 attack on the Beirut offices of the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper.

32. He would appreciate clarification as to: the reasons for which the State party had concluded that there was no need to establish an independent broadcasting licensing authority; and the guarantees afforded in respect of licensing. He would also welcome information regarding the National Audiovisual Council of Lebanon, including details on its membership and the legislative framework within which it operated. He would be interested to hear about the implementation of Act No. 28 concerning the right of access to information and about any measures to address the issue of corruption, such as the establishment of an independent national body charged with combating the phenomenon.

33. **Ms. Abdo Rocholl** said that she would appreciate information on legislation regulating the conduct of persons engaged in peaceful assembly and on provisions regarding the authority of the Government to prevent public assembly. It would be useful to hear more about peaceful demonstrations which had been stopped by the Government in the previous five years. According to reports, the authorities often used excessive force against peaceful demonstrators. In that connection, she would like to learn more about the response of law enforcement to the protests which had taken place in the country in 2015; it would be helpful if the delegation could provide details such as the number of protesters injured or arrested and the legal status of the protesters arrested. She would also like to know whether any of the public officials who had inflicted violence during those protests had been brought before the courts and if so, what the outcome of their prosecution had been. Regarding the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials in general, she would appreciate data on the number of court cases brought and the types of sentences handed down. She would appreciate information on whether the State party had established an official protocol for the controlled use of force by the authorities and whether law enforcement received regular training on the subject. She would welcome a description of the mechanism for lodging complaints against law enforcement officials.

34. Given numerous recent examples of non-enforcement of the law prohibiting public-sector employees from establishing associations or engaging in strike action, she wondered whether the Government would consider the abrogation of the law. She would also welcome a description of the conditions to which foreign workers' right to freedom of association was subject.

35. The Committee would appreciate an account of the measures taken to address the reportedly high number of child and/or forced marriages among Syrian refugee women and girls and rural girls. It would also welcome data on how many such marriages had taken place in the years 2015, 2016 and 2017. It would be useful to learn more about the bill on raising the minimum age of marriage, including the expected date of its enactment and any exceptions to the minimum for which the bill provided.

36. **Ms. Brands Kehris** said that she would appreciate clarification as to the State party's intentions regarding the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. Given that their sexual orientation or gender identity provided grounds for arrest, she would welcome an explanation of the means by which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons could seek protection from any violation of their rights which was motivated by intolerance of particular sexual orientations or gender identities. Article 534 of the Penal Code criminalized sexual intercourse "contrary to the order of nature"; she would like to have statistics on the number of cases brought under that article in the previous five years and wished to know whether there were any plans for its repeal.

37. She would welcome information on the detention of trade-union activists Sojana Rana and Roja Limbu and on the legislation limiting the right of foreign nationals to union membership. She would be interested to hear about: any steps taken to ensure that domestic workers are free to establish trade unions; the right of agricultural workers to strike; and the status of the association reportedly established between public- and private-school teachers.

38. She would like to know whether members of non-registered religious denominations, such as Hindus, remained ineligible for political candidacy. She would like to hear about any measures taken to provide persons limited by the denominational system with opportunities for effective participation in public life. As stated in general comment No. 25, the right to vote "should be available to every adult citizen"; it would thus be useful to understand the State party's reasoning behind the establishment of 18 years as the age of majority and 21 years as the age at which citizens were allowed to vote. It would also be helpful to hear more about the prohibition from electoral participation imposed on persons deprived of their liberty and how it complied with the general comment; she wished to know whether the prohibition applied to both persons in pretrial detention and convicted persons, and whether it also applied to persons in other closed institutions, such as psychiatric facilities. She would welcome additional information on the restrictions applied to military personnel and civil servants with regard to the right to participate in elections. It would also be useful to learn whether there were differences in the electoral rights afforded to Lebanese-born citizens and those afforded to naturalized citizens. She would be interested to hear more about how membership, or lack thereof, of one of the 18 recognized religious communities affected eligibility for public service. She would appreciate clarification as to the public-sector posts reserved for specific religious denominations. The Committee would welcome information on measures to increase women's representation in Government and would appreciate an explanation of the key Government positions held by and available to women.

39. **Mr. Koita** said that the Committee would appreciate information on the outcome of investigations into the 81 deaths which had occurred in the prison system between 2012 and 2016. It would also welcome clarification as to the number of persons who had been sentenced to death.

40. It would be useful to hear about the implementation of the three legal instructions which the Ministry of Justice had issued in 2017 to address the issue of undocumented persons. He wished to know whether the Government had a programme to simplify the child-registration process and reduce the associated costs. He would also like to know whether there were any plans to review legislation on personal status and the civil registry, particularly with a view to ensuring the right of every child to acquire a nationality.

Additional details on the committee established in 2012 to consider the amendment of the Nationality Act would be useful. Finally, he would like to hear whether the State party intended to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

41. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he would appreciate it if the delegation could elaborate on the reprieve granted to women who underwent an abortion to uphold their honour.

The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 5.25 p.m.

42. **Mr. Youssef** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that legislation enacted in 1962 and regulating the status of foreign nationals in Lebanon allowed the appeal of decisions concerning the deportation of foreign workers. Workers who had been deported had violated Lebanese law.

43. The interception of surveillance data did not impinge upon the private life of citizens and was carried out in accordance with the law. Conducted as a preventive security measure, such interception targeted persons who posed a threat to Lebanon, including terrorists and human traffickers. The Directorate General of Public Security rigorously protected biometric and personal data which was collected, and a bill on the issue would soon be before Parliament.

44. Pursuant to various laws, the Directorate General of Public Security was responsible for the oversight of all publications and audiovisual content belonging to diplomatic missions and consulates in the country. All films and other audiovisual material were subject to oversight, regardless of whether they had been produced domestically or imported, and the decision to prohibit the broadcasting of a film was taken by a committee composed of representatives from various ministries. Intellectual works were classified under a specific set of regulations, and the monitoring of artistic output respected the freedom of expression, as enshrined in the Constitution. Works reflecting Lebanese diversity were encouraged, and decisions to censor particular pieces were based on the need to prevent hate speech, violent extremism and terrorism.

45. **Ms. Dahrouj** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the obligations of migrant domestic workers were established in various pieces of legislation. The Directorate General of Public Security was responsible for the implementation of article 569 of the Criminal Code, which provided for the punishment of persons who deprived others of their liberty, including employers who perpetrated such an act against migrant domestic workers. Ill-treatment, such as the withholding of wages or non-compliance with the terms of the standard employment contract, had to be notified to the Ministry of Labour. There were several examples of judgments handed down against employers in both civil and criminal courts for ill-treatment of migrant domestic workers. To further protect the rights of such workers, legislation was being developed; it provided for fair salaries and stipulated the right to annual leave. Pursuant to a decision of the Ministry of Labour, agencies which brought in migrant domestic workers to Lebanon and which violated the law would have their operating licences revoked; several agencies were no longer authorized to conduct business after having complaints filed against them.

46. The establishment of a standard employment contract was one of the most significant achievements of the national committee responsible for migrant domestic workers. In addition, a manual on the rights and obligations of migrant workers was distributed to such workers in their respective mother tongues. Migrant workers whose rights had been violated by their employers could seek refuge in a dedicated shelter which was run by Caritas Lebanon.

47. The principles of freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining were established in the Constitution. Groups which were not authorized to form trade unions did have the right to apply for status as non-governmental organizations; the civil servants' and teachers' federations served as alternatives to unions. The prohibition against striking by civil servants had effectively been rendered purely theoretical; in 2017, for example, numerous strikes and campaigns had been organized by civil servants in favour of raising the minimum wage.

48. **Mr. Kamal** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the system of military courts comprised 27 judges who were appointed by the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council. Also part of the system were a number of judges who were military officers. Most judges in the military system held law degrees.

49. The military prosecution of minors could take place only if a youth-protection officer was present during trial. Minors were prosecuted in military courts only if they had been accused of complicity with an adult; otherwise, they were tried in the juvenile courts. All cases tried in the military courts involved a preliminary police investigation, and in all cases, the charges determined by the investigating judge were subsequently reviewed by a civil judge. The presence of defence counsel was compulsory; if the accused was unable to appoint his or her own counsel, he or she would have a lawyer assigned by the Beirut Bar Association. There had been many cases which the military courts had been deemed not competent to hear; examples included cases involving activists in the civil movement of 2015.

50. Rayak Air Base was the country's largest military aerodrome. Syrian refugees had been expelled from Rayak because it was located near the site of clashes with terrorist groups. Refugee camps were prohibited from the air base and its surroundings for security reasons.

51. His country's delegation wished to reiterate firmly that there were no secret detention centres in Lebanon. The national preventive mechanism, the Committee for Protection from Torture, had been established only recently and had thus not yet begun operations. The relevant training was currently being given to the authorities responsible for law enforcement and detention centres, and the Committee would be free to access all prisons and detention centres upon its inception.

52. **Ms. Akoum** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the Constitution provided for the independence of the judiciary and the principle of a fair trial. Parliament was currently discussing several bills which addressed related issues, including the appointment of judges, the appointment of the Supreme Judicial Council and the budget of the judiciary. The Court of Cassation held judges accountable for their decisions.

53. Under legislation passed in 2017, all persons were entitled to request access to information pertaining to matters of public administration. Where a request for access to information was denied, the decision to deny such access could be appealed. However, the national anti-corruption commission, which was the body responsible for hearing such appeals, had not yet been established.

54. Lebanon was a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and had a ministry dedicated to combating corruption. Several anti-corruption laws were being drafted, addressing specific issues such as money-laundering. Legislation protecting whistle-blowers also served to combat terrorism.

55. Personal-status laws provided for the registration of newborns. Current legislation provided for the registration of children born in Lebanon to undocumented parents. If recognized by one or both parents, an illegitimate child born to Lebanese citizens could be registered under the name of the father or mother. Babies who were foreign nationals could be registered in special files created for that purpose. In early 2018, the Government had established a mechanism for the registration of children born to Syrian refugees; the mechanism was also applicable to the children of Palestinian refugees coming to Lebanon from Syria. After a period of integration, foreign nationals thus registered enjoyed the same rights as Lebanese citizens.

56. There were currently 63 individuals sentenced to death in Lebanon.

57. The issue of abortion took into consideration the right to life of the unborn child. Finally, whether a Lebanese woman married to a foreign national had the right to pass her nationality on to her children was a question which required further analysis by the Government.

58. **Mr. Ghossainy** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that the right to peaceful assembly was enshrined in the Constitution. The code of conduct regulating the

use of force by the authorities was based on international standards. The Government did not exercise its right to stop public demonstrations unless such demonstrations posed a threat to national security. Citizens could lodge complaints through a number of channels.

59. **Mr. Al Maghribi** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that a bill on audiovisual media was currently before Parliament. It would repeal previous legislation on publications, define the mandate of the National Audiovisual Council of Lebanon and, most importantly, repeal legislation providing for the imprisonment of journalists.

60. **Ms. Al Hayek Massaad** (Lebanon), speaking via video link from Beirut, said that a bill dealing with early and forced marriages had been drafted in collaboration with the National Commission for Lebanese Women and the Ministry of Human Rights. After consulting with religious communities which were opposed to the bill, the relevant commission from the Ministry of Justice had determined that no theological issues were at stake. In compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a minimum age for marriage was thus established: the bill set the minimum age at 18 years. Exceptionally, marriage could be entered into at the age of 16 years, as long as special permission had been granted by a judge after the parents concerned had given their consent to the marriage. The bill provided for the punishment of religious authorities who officiated the marriage of minors without legal permission. Several women's organizations had launched a campaign to make girls, particularly those in rural areas, aware of their right to refuse marriage before the age of 18 years.

61. The Government had worked with civil society organizations to create a coalition promoting women's participation in politics, as both voters and candidates. The debates and conferences organized had raised the number of women who participated in public life. Moreover, there were numerous women in key decision-making positions, including posts in the Ministry of Labour and the Public Prosecution Service.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.